United Nations A/55/164

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 July 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Item 158 of the provisional agenda*
Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

Report of the Secretary-General**

I. Introduction

1. On 8 December 1998, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/97, entitled "Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives". Paragraphs 2 to 13 of the resolution read as follows:

"*The General Assembly*,

"...

"2. *Strongly condemns* acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions and representatives, as well as against missions and representatives of international intergovernmental organizations and officials of such organizations, and emphasizes that such acts can never be justified;

"3. *Also strongly condemns* the recent acts of violence against such missions, representatives and officials, referred to in relevant reports under this item;

"4. *Urges* States to strictly observe, implement and enforce the principles and rules of international law governing diplomatic and consular relations and, in particular, to ensure, in conformity with their international obligations, the protection, security and safety of the missions, representatives and officials mentioned in paragraph 2 above officially present in territories under their jurisdiction, including practical measures to prohibit in their territories illegal activities of persons, groups and organizations that encourage, instigate, organize or engage in the perpetration of acts against the security and safety of such missions, representatives and officials;

"5. *Also urges* States to take all necessary measures at the national and international levels to prevent any acts of violence against the missions, representatives and officials mentioned in paragraph 2 above and to ensure, with the participation of the United Nations, where appropriate, that such acts are fully investigated with a view to bringing offenders to justice;

* A/55/150.

** The present report contains responses from States as at 17 July 2000, the deadline set in the circular note on the subject, dated 17 January 2000.

00-54436 (E) 240800

"6. *Recommends* that States cooperate closely through, inter alia, contacts between the diplomatic and consular missions and the receiving State with regard to practical measures designed to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives and with regard to the exchange of information on the circumstances of all serious violations thereof;

"7. *Urges* States to take all appropriate measures in accordance with international law, at the national and international levels, to prevent any abuse of diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities, in particular serious abuses, including those involving acts of violence;

"8. *Recommends* that States cooperate closely with the State in whose territory abuses of diplomatic and consular privileges and immunities may have occurred, including by exchanging information and providing assistance to its juridical authorities in order to bring offenders to justice;

"9. *Calls upon* States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the instruments relevant to the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives;

"10. *Also calls upon* States, in cases where a dispute arises in connection with a violation of their international obligations concerning the protection of the missions or the security of the representatives and officials mentioned in paragraph 2 above, to make use of the means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the good offices of the Secretary-General, and requests the Secretary-General, when he deems it appropriate, to offer his good offices to the States directly concerned;

"11. *Requests* all States to report to the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 9 of resolution 42/154 of 7 December 1987;

"12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to issue a report on the item, in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 42/154, containing also an analytical summary of the reports received under paragraph 11 above, on an annual basis, as well as to proceed with his other tasks pursuant to the same resolution;

"13. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fifth session the item entitled 'Consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives'."

2. By a note dated 17 January 2000, the Secretary-General drew the attention of States to the request contained in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 53/97 and invited them to report to the Secretary-General serious violations of the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives.

3. The present report is prepared pursuant to paragraph 12 of resolution 53/97.

4. Section II of the report contains a summary of the reports received and the text of those reports.

5. Section III of the present report contains the comments received from States in response to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 42/154.

6. Section IV of the present report contains information on the status of participation of States, as at 1 June 2000, in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961,[1] the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963[2] and the respective optional protocols thereto, as well as the 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents.[3]

II. Reports received from States pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 53/97

7. **Turkey** submitted a report, dated 4 May 2000, describing acts of violence directed against its consulate premises and the car of the Turkish Counsellor in Greece. The relevant portion of the report reads as follows:

"On 8 February 1999, a bomb exploded in a building under construction opposite the Turkish Consulate General in Komotini, Greece, targeting the consulate premises. Though there was no damage to the premises and no loss of life among the personnel of the consulate, a bomb disposal

specialist of the Greek Police was wounded while defusing the bomb and was hospitalized.

"On 1 April 2000, after midnight, two front tyres of the private car of Mr. Kerem Kiratli, Counsellor of the Turkish Embassy in Athens, were punctured by a sharp tool while parked at a central location on Alexandras Avenue in Athens. The next morning, the car was further damaged by cement thrown on its bonnet, windshield and windows. The fact that these two successive acts directed selectively against Mr. Kiratli's car while other parked cars in the area remained untouched makes it evident that they were carried out on purpose."

8. The report, dated 12 May 2000, submitted by **Denmark** provided information on two incidents in Denmark, one at the Embassy of Greece and the other at the Embassy of the United States of America. The relevant portion of the report reads as follows:

"On 16 February, some 50 activists forcibly entered the Greek Embassy, subsequent to the apprehension of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in connection with a sojourn in the Greek Embassy in Nairobi having become known publicly. One activist set herself on fire; 48 were arrested.

"On 27 March, some 2,000 Serbs residing in Denmark demonstrated in front of the Embassy of the United States in protest against Kosovo-related action by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. During the ensuing public disturbance several Embassy windows were damaged."

9. The **Holy See** related in its report dated 22 May 2000, an incident in Papua New Guinea. The report reads as follows:

"On 18 February 2000, an attempt of aggression was committed against His Excellency Archbishop Hans Schwemmer, Apostolic Nuncio in Papua New Guinea, by five armed men who tried to block the Nuncio's car as he was returning to the Nunciature located in Air Niugini village. The attempt was fortunately foiled thanks to the driver's skill and alertness."

10. In response to the report, dated 4 May 2000 submitted by Turkey, reproduced in paragraph 6 above, **Greece** submitted the following response dated 29 June 2000:

"As regards the bomb exploded in a building under construction, on the other side of the road opposite the Turkish Consulate General in Komotini, the competent Greek authorities took all the necessary measures to defuse it, although the target of the bomb was not necessarily the consulate. Neither casualties nor damage were reported, as was acknowledged by the Turkish Consulate. During the efforts to defuse the bomb, a Greek police officer was wounded.

"Concerning the tyre puncture of the car of the Counsellor of the Turkish Embassy in Athens, it should be noted that such acts of vandalism occur in most big cities and are not considered to be of a political nature. It should also be noted that vehicles belonging to staff members of the Turkish Embassy in Athens are provided with conventional licence plates."

11. **Greece** also submitted another report, dated 29 June 2000:

"On 7 December 1999, the apartment of Mrs. Ek. Grabovitis, an employee of the Greek Consulate General in Istanbul, was broken into by unknown persons. Several items were missing, but not valuable ones.

"On 3 January 2000, the apartment of Mr. Ekonomopoulos, an employee of the Greek Embassy in Ankara, had signs of burglary, but none of his personal belongings was missing.

"On 19 February 2000, the Counsellor of the Greek Embassy in Ankara, Mr. C. Moatsos, found many windows of his apartment widely opened, though he had closed them before his departure.

"In March 2000, the maid of the Greek Vice-Consul in Istanbul, Mr. Gikas, discovered that the latter's apartment bore evidence of burglary. Nothing was missing.

"In March 2000, the apartment of Mr. N. Tselios, an employee of the Greek Embassy in Ankara, was broken into. His briefcase had been taken."

12. **Uruguay** reported only minor incidents in its report, dated 10 July 2000:

"No serious incidents were reported in 1999 in relation to diplomatic personnel accredited in Uruguay. Only six investigations were carried out in which diplomatic property or vehicles had been the target of criminal acts: two cases of damage and breakage, three cases of theft and one case where a car had been burnt.

"There were no reports in 1999 of physical attacks on diplomatic personnel accredited in Uruguay.

"In the light of the above, the Government considers that there is an acceptable level of security and safety in Uruguay.

"As for special events (visits by heads of State or Government, royalty, electoral events at foreign consulates, etc.), no incidents have been reported.

"As a measure to improve the security and safety of diplomatic personnel and high-level officials visiting the country, the Government of Uruguay is considering the possibility of establishing a system similar to the security system for the Legislature, with an office located at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be responsible for special guard and protection services and for protecting dignitaries."

13. **Austria, Burkina Faso, Germany** and **Saudi Arabia** reported that there had been no violations during the reporting period.

III. Views received from States pursuant to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 42/154

14. By its report, dated 27 April 2000, **Kuwait** provided its views as follows:

"The competent authorities in Kuwait, after careful consideration of this matter, believe that the location of the majority of embassies, diplomatic and consular missions and their representatives in densely populated areas makes the provision of protection very difficult. Problems include the following:

(a) The difficulty of controlling entry into and exit from such areas;

(b) The ease with which third parties may observe and approach embassy buildings;

(c) The difficulty of providing security and control for embassy buildings that are attached to residential buildings;

(d) The difficulty of providing the necessary manpower for security operations for embassies located in a number of different areas throughout the country.

"In view of the foregoing, we consider that a special location should be set aside for embassies, diplomatic and consular missions and their representatives, if the competent authority is to provide the security protection necessary for those institutions and guarantee their safety, and if the duty of all States to make appropriate arrangements to that end is to be fulfilled. On this basis, the host country should locate a number of embassies in one area, thereby facilitating security and control and the provision of measures that will guarantee security protection for the embassies. This will also make them less susceptible to terrorist operations and other dangers, an important consideration in view of the acts of sabotage to which embassies have been subjected in a number of countries in recent years."

15. In a report dated 19 May 2000, **Saudi Arabia** set forth its efforts in this area:

"The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has set aside a whole section of the city of Riyadh for most of the embassies and ambassadorial residences. This section of the city has been carefully planned and contains all the required services. It is particularly secure and is patrolled by security agents around the clock to ensure the protection of diplomatic sites. The same quality of protection is provided for other embassies and delegations on Saudi territory.

"The Kingdom deals with this issue as a patriotic and religious duty according to Islamic teachings and hallowed social traditions. The Prophet Muhammed (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Whoever believes in God and the Day of Judgement will have to treat his guest generously.' A guest has to

be treated with generosity and made to feel safe and welcome. Furthermore, in so doing, the Kingdom complies with international laws and customs.

"Our security services also ensure the safety of Saudi missions abroad. The host countries merely provide routine patrols every now and then.

"The security services follow events around the world and enhance precaution and intensify security measures as the situation may require. The Kingdom cooperates with the rest of the States of the world in combating terrorism.

"The security services in the Kingdom respond positively to requests by foreign embassies and missions to intensify measures at their sites, if required.

"Diplomatic missions in the Kingdom are aware of the efforts of Saudi security services at their locations and have expressed appreciation therefor.

"As a result of the activities of the competent Saudi authorities in this regard, no instance of murder or assault on foreign diplomats or assault on diplomatic missions has ever taken place."

IV. Status of participation in international conventions pertaining to the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives as at 1 June 2000[4]

16. Each instrument listed below is represented by the letter shown on the left in tables 1 and 2.

A: Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 (signed at Vienna on 18 April 1961; entered into force on 24 April 1964, in accordance with article 51).

B: Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations concerning Acquisition of Nationality of 1961 (signed at Vienna on 18 April 1961; entered into force on 24 April 1964, in accordance with article VI).

C: Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes of 1961 (signed at Vienna on 18 April 1961; entered into force on 24 April 1964).

D: Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963 (signed at Vienna on 24 April 1963; entered into force on 19 March 1967, in accordance with article 77).

E: Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations concerning Acquisition of Nationality of 1963 (signed at Vienna on 24 April 1963; entered into force on 19 March 1967).

F: Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes of 1963 (signed at Vienna on 24 April 1963; entered into force on 19 March 1967).

G: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, of 1973 (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 14 December 1973; entered into force on 20 February 1977).

Table 1
Total participation in International Conventions pertaining to the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

Signature						
A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
61	19	30	49	18	38	26

Ratification, accession or succession						
A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
179	49	62	163	38	45	102

Table 2

Status of participation in International Conventions pertaining to the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Afghanistan								A						
Albania	A							A			D			
Algeria								A			D			
Andorra								A			D			
Angola								A			D			
Antigua and Barbuda											D			G
Argentina	A	B		D		F		A	B		D			G
Armenia								A			D			G
Australia	A			D			G	A		C	D		F	G
Austria	A		C	D		F		A		C	D		F	G
Azerbaijan								A			D			
Bahamas								A		C	D			G
Bahrain								A			D			
Bangladesh								A			D			
Barbados								A			D			G
Belarus	A						G	A			D			G
Belgium	A		C	D		F		A	B	C	D	E	F	
Belize														
Benin				D		F		A			D			
Bhutan								A			D			G
Bolivia				D				A			D			
Bosnia and Herzegovina					E	F		A	B	C	D			G
Botswana								A	B	C				
Brazil	A			D	E			A			D			G
Brunei Darussalam														G
Bulgaria	A						G	A		C	D	E	F	G
Burkina Faso				D		F		A			D		F	
Burundi								A						G
Cambodia								A	B	C				
Cameroon		D	E	F				A			D			G
Canada	A						G	A			D			G
Cape Verde								A			D			
Central African Republic	A	B	C	D		F		A	B	C				
Chad								A						
Chile	A			D		F		A			D			G

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
China								A			D			G
Colombia	A		C	D	E	F		A			D			G
Comoros														
Congo				D	E	F		A						
Cook Islands														
Costa Rica	A			D				A		C	D			G
Côte d'Ivoire				D		F		A						
Croatia								A			D			G
Cuba	A			D				A			D			G
Cyprus								A			D			G
Czech Republic								A			D			G
Democratic People's Republic of Korea								A			D			G
Democratic Republic of the Congo	A			D	E	F		A	B	C	D			G
Denmark	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Djibouti								A			D			
Dominica								A			D			
Dominican Republic	A	B	C	D	E	F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Ecuador	A		C	D			G	A		C	D			G
Egypt								A	B		D	E		G
El Salvador								A			D			G
Equatorial Guinea								A			D			
Eritrea								A			D			
Estonia								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Ethiopia								A						
Fiji								A		C	D			
Finland	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
France	A		C	D		F		A		C	D		F	
Gabon				D		F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Gambia														
Georgia								A			D			
Germany	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Ghana	A	B	C	D	E	F		A			D	E		G
Greece	A							A			D			G
Grenada								A			D			
Guatemala	A						G	A			D			G
Guinea								A	B	C	D			
Guinea-Bissau								A						
Guyana								A			D			

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Haiti								A			D			G
Holy See	A			D				A			D			
Honduras								A			D			
Hungary	A						G	A		C	D		F	G
Iceland							G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
India								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Indonesia								A	B		D	E		
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	A	B	C	D				A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Iraq	A	B	C					A	B	C	D	E		G
Ireland	A		C	D		F		A			D			
Israel	A		C	D				A						G
Italy	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Jamaica								A			D			G
Japan	A		C					A		C	D		F	G
Jordan								A			D			G
Kazakhstan								A			D			G
Kenya								A	B	C	D	E	F	
Kiribati								A			D			
Kuwait				D	E	F		A		C	D			G
Kyrgyzstan								A			D			
Lao People's Democratic Republic								A	B	C	D	E	F	
Latvia								A			D			G
Lebanon	A	B	C	D		F		A			D			G
Lesotho								A			D			
Liberia	A			D	E	F		A			D			G
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya								A	B		D			
Liechtenstein	A		C	D		F		A		C	D		F	G
Lithuania								A			D			
Luxembourg	A		C	D		F		A		C	D		F	
Madagascar								A	B	C	D	E	F	
Malawi								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Malaysia								A	B	C	D			
Maldives											D			G
Mali								A			D			
Malta								A		C	D			
Marshall Islands								A			D			
Mauritania								A						G
Mauritius								A		C	D		F	

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Mexico	A			D				A			D			G
Micronesia (Federated States of)								A			D			
Monaco														
Mongolia							G	A			D			G
Morocco								A	B		D	E		
Mozambique								A			D			
Myanmar								A	B		D			
Namibia								A			D			
Nauru								A						
Nepal								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Netherlands								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
New Zealand	A		C					A		C	D		F	G
Nicaragua							G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Niger				D		F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Nigeria	A							A			D			
Niue														
Norway	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Oman								A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Pakistan	A							A		C	D		F	G
Palau														
Panama	A			D	E	F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Papua New Guinea								A			D			
Paraguay							G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Peru				D		F		A			D			G
Philippines	A	B	C	D		F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Poland	A			D			G	A			D			G
Portugal								A			D			G
Qatar								A			D			G
Republic of Korea	A	B	C					A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Republic of Moldova								A			D			G
Romania	A						G	A			D			G
Russian Federation	A						G	A			D			G
Rwanda							G	A			D			G
Saint Kitts and Nevis														
Saint Lucia								A			D			
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines								A			D			
Samoa								A			D			
San Marino	A							A						

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
Sao Tome and Principe								A			D			
Saudi Arabia								A			D			
Senegal	A	B						A			D	E	F	
Seychelles								A		C	D		F	G
Sierra Leone								A						
Singapore														
Slovakia								A		C	D		F	G
Slovenia								A		C	D			G
Solomon Islands														
Somalia								A			D			
South Africa	A							A			D			
Spain								A			D			G
Sri Lanka	A							A	B	C				G
Sudan								A			D			G
Suriname								A	B	C	D	E	F	
Swaziland								A						
Sweden	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Switzerland	A		C	D		F		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Syrian Arab Republic								A	B		D	E		G
Tajikistan								A			D			
Thailand	A	B						A	B		D	E		G
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia								A	B	C	D			G
Togo								A			D			G
Tonga								A			D			
Trinidad and Tobago								A			D			G
Tunisia							G	A	B		D	E		G
Turkey								A			D			G
Turkmenistan								A			D			G
Tuvalu								A			D			
Uganda								A						
Ukraine	A						G	A			D			G
United Arab Emirates								A			D			
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	A		C	D		F	G	A		C	D		F	G
United Republic of Tanzania	A	B	C					A	B	C	D			
United States of America	A		C	D		F	G	A		C	D		F	G
Uruguay	A			D		F		A			D			G

State	Signature							Ratification, accession or succession						
	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*
Uzbekistan								A			D			G
Vanuatu											D			
Venezuela	A			D				A			D			
Viet Nam								A			D			
Yemen								A			D			G
Yugoslavia	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D			G
Zambia								A						
Zimbabwe								A			D			

Notes

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 500, No. 7310, p. 95.

[2] Ibid., vol. 596, No. 8638, p. 261.

[3] General Assembly resolution 3166 (XXVIII), annex.

[4] For detailed information, see relevant chapters of *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General — Status as at 31 December 1999* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.V.2); see also the Internet address http://www.un.org./Depts/Treaty/bible.htm.

United Nations A/55/165

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 July 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Items 67 and 68 (a) and (b)
of the provisional agenda*
Development of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States

Maintenance of international security

Letter dated 20 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the joint statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process, issued at the annual ministerial meeting, held in Ohrid, the Republic of Macedonia, on 14 July 2000.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under items 67 and 68 of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Naste **Calovski**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/55/150.

00-54691 (E) 210800

Annex to the letter dated 20 July 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process issued at Ohrid, 14 July 2000

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of South-East European countries, Ismail Cern, Aleksandar Dimitrov, Nadezhda Mihaylova, Paskal Milo and George Papandreou, as well as Eugen Dijmarescu, State Secretary for European Affairs, met in Ohrid, on 14 July 2000, at the annual ministerial meeting of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP).

Tonino Picula, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mladen Bosic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, also attended the meeting as representatives of observer countries to the SEECP.

Representatives of the Office of the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact, Austria (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Chairman-in-Office), the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary (the Central European Initiative Chair), the Republic of Moldova, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, the United States of America, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the South-East European Cooperative Initiative, the Economic Commission for Europe and the World Bank also attended the meeting as invitees.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the high level of good relations among their countries, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, shared Euro-Atlantic values and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) principles for relations among States, respecting sovereignty, the inviolability of borders, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. They reaffirmed their commitment to further develop their cooperation in the spirit of good-neighbourliness, openness and cooperativeness in order to attain their countries' common goal to transform South-Eastern Europe into a region of security, stability and economic prosperity.

The Ministers exchanged views on the developments affecting stability, security and democracy in South-Eastern Europe and the role of the SEECP, taking note with satisfaction that the focus of the international community on concerted efforts to foster peace, democracy, stability, security, respect for human rights and economic prosperity in the South-East European region corresponds fully to the SEECP strategic objectives.

The Ministers expressed their conviction that the South-East European Cooperation Process has been developing into a major cooperation initiative of the countries in the region with great potential to promote good-neighbourly relations, cooperation, peace and stability in South-Eastern Europe. They reiterated that the adoption of the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe represents a genuine code of conduct for the

relations among their countries and a major contribution to the strengthening of cooperation and stability in the region.

Reaffirming their conviction that the future of the region lies in its integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic political and security structures, the Ministers expressed their firm commitment for the inclusion of the SEECP participating countries in these structures.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress in the European Union enlargement process resulting from the Luxembourg and Helsinki European Council Summit decisions. In the same context, they welcomed the Santa Maria de Feira European Council conclusions, which stressed that the countries included in the process of stabilization and association are recognized as potential candidates for European Union membership, and the European Union's commitment to the fullest possible integration of the countries concerned in the political and economic mainstream of Europe.

The Ministers welcomed the progress made by the countries included in the stabilization and association process with respect to the negotiations on the stabilization and association agreements with the European Union.

The Ministers took note with interest of the proposal to convene a summit meeting between the European Union and the concerned countries in the region, to be held in autumn in Croatia, where the European Union member States should confirm the commitment to supporting the process of democratic and economic reforms for the purpose of these countries' accelerated rapprochement with the European Union.

Firmly convinced that the NATO integration of the appellant countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process would contribute to the strengthening of the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area, the Ministers welcomed the results of the recently held Vilnius Conference, where the nine countries aspiring to NATO membership issued a joint statement in which they asked NATO member countries to invite them to the 2002 NATO Summit to join the alliance, emphasizing in this regard the importance of successful completion of the membership action plan.

In this context, as an expression of the readiness of their respective Governments to undertake their share of the responsibilities for building defence cooperation, developing confidence and security-building initiatives and strengthening security, stability and transparency in the region of South-Eastern Europe, the Ministers especially underscored the role and contribution of the Multinational Peace Force/South-East Europe as part of the South-East European Defence Ministerial Process. They also reconfirmed their determination to further contribute to the successful implementation of the NATO South-Eastern Europe initiative.

Underlining the importance of preventing the illegal transfer and possession of small arms and light weapons for the stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe, the Ministers expressed their determination for further practical cooperation in these fields.

The Ministers reviewed the situation in the region, including the developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They expressed their deep concern over the

recent revision of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Constitution with the clear objective of prolonging the mandate in office of the current President, entailing serious consequences for the country and for stability and security in the region. They expressed their support for democratic forces, independent media and civil society in their struggle for democratization of the country. They stated that they looked forward to the time when the future democratic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, cooperating with its neighbours, would be able to be fully integrated into the international community and its structures.

The Ministers also reviewed the situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and expressed their high appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the international community for the stabilization and reconstruction of the province, where the rights of all citizens and ethnic and religious communities will be fully and equally respected. In this context, they confirmed their full support to the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force to bring peace and democracy to Kosovo. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to contribute to building in Kosovo a democratic, multi-ethnic and multicultural society based on substantial autonomy, taking into account the Rambouillet accords as well as the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, pending a final settlement in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). They reiterated also their support for this resolution, which is expected to be fully implemented and strictly adhered to by all concerned. Taking into consideration the efforts of the international community for establishing lasting peace and democratic development, the Ministers stressed the need for elimination of the concept of ethnically clean territories, and expressed their firm commitment to create the conditions necessary for the return of all refugees, regardless of their ethnic origin, as the basis for building an open civil society.

While taking note of the improvement of the security climate in Kosovo, they condemned any attempts to renew ethnically, politically or criminally motivated violence as acts undermining the efforts undertaken by the international community and all democratic political forces in Kosovo aimed at enhancing the process of restoring peace and stability, respecting the inviolability of borders, starting economic development and building administrative structures in the province.

They considered that the participation of the representatives of all ethnic and religious communities in the joint interim administrative structures is of utmost importance. The Ministers urged all local leaders to live up to their responsibilities for the success of the political process. In this context, they welcomed the decision of the representatives of the Serb Community to continue participating in the joint interim administrative structures.

Underlining the importance of creating the necessary conditions later this year for conducting free and fair local elections in Kosovo, which will provide democratic representation of all citizens of Kosovo in the local administrative structures, the Ministers expressed their full support for the efforts of OSCE and Council of Europe to that end.

The Ministers expressed their support for the democratic and reform-oriented policy of the leadership of Montenegro, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and further expressed their concern over the continuous pressure coming from the current Yugoslav regime.

The Ministers commended the progress achieved by Croatia in the democratic and economic reforms and welcomed the inclusion of Croatia in the NATO Partnership for Peace programme.

The Ministers supported the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe, which would represent an important contribution to the establishment of lasting peace and stability in South-eastern Europe. They considered this step as concrete support to all democratic forces in that country striving to fully implement the Dayton Agreement and to achieve the aim of establishing a democratic society based on principles of respect of human rights and the rule of law. The Ministers urged citizens and the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take ownership of their future and they reaffirmed their support for the High Representative to increase the effectiveness of the common institutions foreseen in the Peace Agreement, in particular the Council of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, as requested by the Peace Implementation Council.

The Ministers underlined the need for accelerated and full implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, which would facilitate economic growth as a prerequisite for political stability and wider democratization in South-Eastern Europe. They also stressed the need for a greater degree of transparency in the process, for strengthening the role of co-chairs and for closer cooperation between the SEECP and the Office of the Special Coordinator.

The Ministers welcomed the progress in the realization of the initiatives and projects within the Stability Pact, especially the Investment Compact and the Anti-Corruption Initiative. Furthermore, they expressed their expectation for greater participation of their countries in the implementation of the Stability Pact through their assumption of the role of true owners of the process, in accordance with the Sarajevo Declaration.

The Ministers welcomed the results of the Brussels regional funding conference as well as the initial results of the financing and implementation of selected projects. In this context, they underlined the need for prompt realization of the quick-start project package in order to achieve the first concrete results in the implementation of the Stability Pact. Welcoming the readiness of the donor countries to make decisive steps towards the implementation of priority projects of regional interest, they underlined the necessity of visible short-term results, with the expectation that the declared support would materialize through concrete financial assistance and the elimination of all obstacles on the way to project implementation.

The Ministers pointed to the need for increasing, to the extent possible, the share of grants in the assistance package.

The Ministers welcomed the results of the informal ministerial meeting of the South-East European countries and the meeting of the Regional Table for South-Eastern Europe, held in Thessaloniki, Greece, where the Agenda for Stability — a document determining the framework for future intensive cooperation — was adopted. They expressed their full support for the efforts of the Stability Pact Special Coordinator to overcome difficulties in the realization of this extremely important process.

The Ministers commended the substantial efforts of the Committee of Political Directors for the more active inclusion of the SEECP in the Stability Pact, particularly in harmonizing and coordinating the positions of the SEECP

participating countries towards the implementation of the Stability Pact. The result of the recent effort was the Elements for Joint Position on the Stability Pact of the SEECP Countries, presented by the SEECP Chairman-in-Office at the meeting of the Stability Pact Regional Table in Thessaloniki.

Taking into account the direct and indirect losses of the countries of the region suffered as a result of the conflict in Kosovo and sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Ministers expressed their appreciation for the positive response for continuing assistance to the two countries most affected by the crisis.

The Ministers also stressed the necessity to accelerate efforts for restoring free navigation on the Danube. In this context, they welcomed European Union assistance to the Danube Commission and called for an early reopening of this major European waterway.

Stressing the importance of the SEECP as a forum for political dialogue and cooperation among the countries in the region, they entrusted the political directors with the task of making full use of the possibilities provided by the Charter on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe in order to conduct political consultations, to examine the ways and means for developing cooperation in the established areas of common interest and to assess the possibility for further institutional development of the Process in parallel with the development of cooperation activities and reporting as the concrete results on these points are obtained.

As part of their exchange of opinions on matters of common interest, the Ministers emphasized the importance of closer involvement of the relevant institutions and agencies of their Governments as well as of non-governmental institutions, through international and regional organizations, in the following fields:

- Supporting contacts and dialogue among the elected representatives of peoples by strengthening the parliamentary dimension and especially the cooperation among the Speakers of Parliaments and Chairpersons of parliamentary committees for foreign affairs;
- Cooperation in order to promote trade and investments between their countries, including in the financial and banking areas;
- Cooperation in combating organized crime, trafficking of illicit drugs, arms and human beings and terrorism;
- Closer and intensive practical cooperation, as necessary, combining national means in order to fight natural disasters and to alleviate their consequences;
- Intensifying cooperation in the areas of justice and home affairs;
- Developing further cooperation and exchange in the fields of culture, youth, sports and environmental protection;
- Promoting cooperation and increased dialogue between non-governmental organizations active in various fields.

The Ministers commended the work of the Committee of Political Directors in the preparation of the high-level meetings, as well as in the institutional development of the process with a positive contribution towards fostering regional cooperation within the SEECP.

The Ministers approved the report submitted to them by the Committee of Political Directors.

The Ministers reiterated the status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a SEECP participating country, considering the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's chair as temporarily vacant, to be resumed as soon as conditions allow it.

The Ministers expressed their appreciation for the hospitality of Aleksandar Dimitrov for hosting the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries participating in the South-East European Cooperation Process.

In view of the fact that as from 1 March 2001 the next SEECP Chairman-in-Office shall be Paskal Milo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ministers agreed that their next annual meeting would take place in Tirana in June 2001.